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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000859

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV UNSC UNFICYP CU CY

SUBJECT: CYPRUS: CHRISTOFIAS TELLS P-5 HE IS NOT OPTIMISTIC  
ABOUT A SOLUTION

REF: URBANCIC-KAIDANOW EMAIL 9-25-2009

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. At an annual lunch with P-5 missions to the UN, Cyprus President Demitris Christofias said he was not optimistic about the possible outcome of Cyprus reunification talks. He cited Turkish PM Erdogan as being responsible for Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat's hard position on a confederation of two equal states. Christofias said he was prepared to allow 50,000 Turkish "settlers" to remain on the island as part of a settlement, and urged the international community to maintain pressure on Turkey to abide by its commitments to open Turkish ports to Cypriot traffic. Ambassador Wolff praised Christofias' efforts so far, and suggested that heightened Greek Cypriot criticism of Special Advisor Downer could disrupt the settlement process. Christofias said Downer was at times undiplomatic and careless in his public statements. On the margins, Ambassador Wolff urged Christofias' to raise human rights with Cuban authorities when he visits Cuba. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Cyprus President Demitris Christofias met with Permreps from the United Kingdom and Russia and Deputy Permreps from the U.S., France and China on September 25, during an annual P-5 luncheon on the margins of the UNGA General Debate. Summarizing his views of the reunification negotiations currently underway, Christofias said he was not optimistic about the outcome. There were philosophical differences between the two sides, he said, not just different negotiating positions. In particular, Christofias referred to the Turkish Cypriot position that Cyprus should be a confederation of two equal states, with each constituent states able to establish foreign relations. This, he said, was contrary to the agreed starting point for negotiations between Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat. He said he had shown good will toward Talat by offering a rotating presidency/vice-presidency for the federal state (one from each community), but that Talat had not reciprocated. Christofias attributed Talat's hard line on this issue to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan.

¶3. (C) Christofias said 160,000 Turkish settlers had moved to the island since the partition. He said he was prepared to allow 50,000 of the settlers to remain in the context of a settlement. On the question of property, he said most of the ownership disputes were in the Turkish Cypriot area, and added that he wanted to see the Famagusta area opened to Greek Cypriot resettlement. He called for the international community and the European Union to maintain pressure on Turkey to fully comply with its obligations to open its ports to Cyprus in advance of the review of Turkey's EU acquis in December 2009.

¶4. (C) Christofias also blamed the Turkish Cypriot side for the lack of progress on security guarantees, which had been set aside in the first round. He understood it would not be feasible to have military bases in the Turkish Cypriot areas.

U.K. Permrep Sawers said that he could foresee the U.K. offering up some territory as part of a comprehensive settlement, but would maintain U.K. sovereign base areas.

¶4. (C) Christofias said he had asked UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during their bilateral meeting on the margins of the UNGA General Debate about his plans to visit the island. The SYG said he would consider visiting Cyprus, but only if he could announce some progress in the negotiations.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Wolff offered U.S. support for Christofias' efforts, applauded the creativity he had shown in the negotiations so far, and urged him to persevere in the difficult effort to reach a solution. Per Ref email, Wolff also stressed that the Good Offices mission led by Special Advisor Downer was essential to the success of the negotiations, and said criticism of Downer had become a distraction that risked impeding progress. Christofias replied that he had welcomed Downer's appointment as Special Advisor, but that Downer had at times characterized the negotiations to the media and NGOs in terms that the President thought were careless and undiplomatic. Christofias said he was frankly surprised by Downer's comments to the media that the Greek Cypriot side should forget about the departure of settlers from the island, and by a suggestion from Downer that the UN might not keep UNFICYP in place.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. Christofias' reaction to Downer's activities and his demeanor when discussing the Special Advisor suggest that Downer does not have the President's full support and confidence. Christofias was clearly uncomfortable when

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Ambassador Wolff raised the matter in front of Foreign Minister Kyprianou. END COMMENT.

CUBA

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¶7. (C) Ambassador Wolff took Christofias aside at the end of the lunch and urged him to use his upcoming visit to Cuba to stress to the authorities the importance of respecting human rights. Christofias said that Nicosia had made a similar request of him, but offered no further comment.

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